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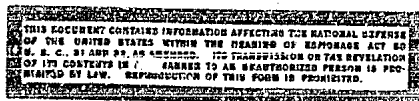
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PURGE OF RUMANIAN AIR FORCE

Two Rumanian flight officers, who recently fled to Yugoslavia in a Messerschmitt, report widespread repressive measures in the wake of the Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu, and Vasile Luca purges. The fliers, Capt Ioan Gheorghiu and Lt Constantin Boris, landed at the Vojvodina field on 5 July 1952. They had been assigned to the 180th Fighter Squadron, stationed at the Lugo field in Rumania.

The unpopularity of Pauker, Georgescu, and Luca is ascribed by both fliers to the fact that they were the chief agents of Soviet expansion and political suppression. Pauker was particularly unpopular because Moscow had placed her in charge of collectivization.

Peasants who rebelled against collectivization were arrested and shipped to the Danube-Black Sea Canal, or other slave labor projects. The three leaders were deposed because the regime needed scapegoats for the growing embitterment of the people. Both fliers assert that the fall of Pauker and her friends would not lead to any change in political policy. Pressure from Moscow had become stronger than ever and their successors were equally tools of the USSR.

The two officers state that a wave of arrests spread through the country following the purge of the three leaders. Arrests were particularly numerous in the three ministries which the fallen Communists headed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Domestic Affairs. In the Floesti area alone, 3,000 police were arrested. Vasile Modoran, former assistant Minister of Finance, and Aurel Vijoli, director of the state bank, were among those arrested.

Numerous arrests and discharges from the service occurred in the air force. The purge of the air force was probably brought about by the flight on 13 March of the operations officer, the political commissar, and the physician of the 17th Bomber Squadron, stationed in Stalin. These men flew in a bomber to Yugoslavia. Shortly afterward, Maj Gen Constantin Doncea, chief

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of the air defense of Bucharest, was arrested and shot. Others arrested were: the commanding officer of the 17th Bomber Squadron and his political commissar; all personnel on duty on the day of flight at the Stalin field, base of the 17th Bomber Squadron; Major Popescu (fnu), and Major Giutu (fnu), commander of of the air division in Bucharest, who had given the refugees flight permits.

Gen Emil Rodnars, Minister of the Armed Forces, told a meeting of higher officers that the air force would have to be purged of all unreliaables. As a result, 12 months after the flight of the bomber, 80 percent of all prewar officers and 30 percent of all newer officers of the air force were removed. In addition Lt Gen Paul Verdes, chief of the general staff, and Maj Gen Bactis (fnu) were arrested, according to the fliers.

Gheorghiu and Boris knew nothing of active underground resistance groups. They had, however, heard of sporadic peasant uprisings in 1951. These uprisings had broken out because the mandatory delivery of 70 percent of the harvest led to hunger and privation. Both fliers explained their own flight as a result of the unbearable terror spread throughout Rumania by the USSR. They themselves had been well paid and well fed because the regime gave strong support to the armed forces. The mass of workers and peasants lived in greatest poverty, however.

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